

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claims 1-3 (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) A printing machine ~~as defined in claim 2,~~ for recording an image on a printing plate, and printing the image by using the printing plate with the image recorded thereon, comprising:

a plate cylinder for supporting a printing plate as mounted peripherally thereof;

an image recorder having a recording head movable along a surface of said plate cylinder in a direction parallel to an axis of rotation of said plate cylinder for recording an image on said printing plate mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

an ink feeder for feeding ink to said printing plate with the image recorded thereon mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

a printing means for printing an image on a printing sheet by using the printing plate with an ink fed;

retreat moving means, operable at a printing time, for moving said recording head to a retreat position sideways from a moving region where said recording head is moved at an image-recording time;

a shielding plate disposed between said moving region and said retreat position, and defining an opening for allowing passage of said recording head; and further comprising

a gas jet nozzle for forming an air curtain along said opening as a barrier between said retreat position and said moving region.

5. (Currently Amended) A printing machine ~~as defined in claim 2,~~ for recording an image on a printing plate, and printing the image by using the printing plate with the image recorded thereon, comprising:

a plate cylinder for supporting a printing plate as mounted peripherally thereof;

an image recorder having a recording head movable along a surface of said plate cylinder in a direction parallel to an axis of rotation of said plate cylinder for recording an image on said printing plate mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

an ink feeder for feeding ink to said printing plate with the image recorded thereon mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

a printing means for printing an image on a printing sheet by using the printing plate with an ink fed;

retreat moving means, operable at a printing time, for moving said recording head to a retreat position sideways from a moving region where said recording head is moved at an image-recording time;

a shielding plate disposed between said moving region and said retreat position, and defining an opening for allowing passage of said recording head; and further comprising

a shielding door for opening and closing said opening of said shielding plate.

6. (Original) A printing machine as defined in claim 5, wherein said shielding door is attached to a position of said recording head opposed to said moving region when said recording head is in said retreat position, for closing said opening of said shielding plate when said recording head is in said retreat position.

7. (Currently Amended) A printing machine ~~as defined in claim 2,~~ for recording an image on a printing plate, and printing the image by using the printing plate with the image recorded thereon, comprising:

a plate cylinder for supporting a printing plate as mounted peripherally thereof;

an image recorder having a recording head movable along a surface of said plate cylinder in a direction parallel to an axis of rotation of said plate cylinder for recording an image on said printing plate mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

an ink feeder for feeding ink to said printing plate with the image recorded thereon mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

a printing means for printing an image on a printing sheet by using the printing plate with an ink fed;

retreat moving means, operable at a printing time, for moving said recording head to a retreat position sideways from a moving region where said recording head is moved at an image-recording time;

a shielding plate disposed between said moving region and said retreat position, and defining an opening for allowing passage of said recording head; and further comprising

gas flow forming means for forming a gas flow directed from said retreat position toward said moving region.

8. (Original) A printing machine as defined in claim 7, wherein said gas flow forming means includes a chamber for enclosing said recording head moved to said retreat position, said chamber defining an opening opposed to said moving region for allowing passage of said

recording head, and a fan for drawing a gas from outside said printing machine into said chamber.

Claim 9 (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) A printing machine ~~as defined in claim 9,~~ for recording an image on a printing plate, and printing the image by using the printing plate with the image recorded thereon, comprising:

a plate cylinder for supporting a printing plate as mounted peripherally thereof;

an image recorder having a recording head movable along a surface of said plate cylinder in a direction parallel to an axis of rotation of said plate cylinder for recording an image on said printing plate mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

an ink feeder for feeding ink to said printing plate with the image recorded thereon mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

a printing means for printing an image on a printing sheet by using the printing plate with an ink fed;

retreat moving means, operable at a printing time, for moving said recording head to a retreat position sideways from a moving region where said recording head is moved at an image-recording time;

a chamber for enclosing said recording head moved to said retreat position, said chamber defining an opening opposed to said moving region for allowing passage of said recording head; and further comprising

a gas jet nozzle for forming an air curtain along said opening as a barrier between inside of said chamber and outside of said chamber.

11. (Currently Amended) A printing machine ~~as defined in claim 9,~~ for recording an image on a printing plate, and printing the image by using the printing plate with the image recorded thereon, comprising:

a plate cylinder for supporting a printing plate as mounted peripherally thereof;

an image recorder having a recording head movable along a surface of said plate cylinder in a direction parallel to an axis of rotation of said plate cylinder for recording an image on said printing plate mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

an ink feeder for feeding ink to said printing plate with the image recorded thereon mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

a printing means for printing an image on a printing sheet by using the printing plate with an ink fed;

retreat moving means, operable at a printing time, for moving said recording head to a retreat position sideways from a moving region where said recording head is moved at an image-recording time;

a chamber for enclosing said recording head moved to said retreat position, said chamber defining an opening opposed to said moving region for allowing passage of said recording head; and further comprising

a shielding door for opening and closing said opening of said chamber.

12. (Original) A printing machine as defined in claim 11, wherein said shielding door is attached to a position of said recording head opposed to said moving region when said recording head is in said retreat position, for closing said opening of said chamber when said recording head is in said chamber.

13. (Currently Amended) A printing machine ~~as defined in claim 9~~, for recording an image on a printing plate, and printing the image by using the printing plate with the image recorded thereon, comprising:

a plate cylinder for supporting a printing plate as mounted peripherally thereof;

an image recorder having a recording head movable along a surface of said plate cylinder in a direction parallel to an axis of rotation of said plate cylinder for recording an image on said printing plate mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

an ink feeder for feeding ink to said printing plate with the image recorded thereon mounted peripherally of said plate cylinder;

a printing means for printing an image on a printing sheet by using the printing plate with an ink fed;

retreat moving means, operable at a printing time, for moving said recording head to a retreat position sideways from a moving region where said recording head is moved at an image-recording time;

a chamber for enclosing said recording head moved to said retreat position, said chamber defining an opening opposed to said moving region for allowing passage of said recording head; and further comprising

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gas flow forming means for forming a gas flow directed from inside of said chamber toward outside of said chamber.

Claim 14 (Cancelled)